Silver: Made in Scotland

Documentation relating to my role in ***Silver: Made in Scotland***, National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2008. The exhibition was curated by George Dalgleish. This was the first display (after conservation) of the Garter suit or underdress of the robes of a Knight of the Order of the Garter (object reference NMS A.1947.257). The exhibition opened on 25th January 2008 and closed on 28th April 2008.

The garments are made of cloth of silver and were worn by the Duke of Lennox and Richmond at the court of Charles II. (Charles Stuart, Duke of Richmond was made a Knight of the Garter in 1661). I was part of the team involved in the conservation process. There were two costume elements: a doublet and a pair of trunk hose. My role was the analysis and recording of their construction and the induction of the conservators into the construction process of the original garments so that they might confidently unstitch them where required for the long term conservation of the textiles. The exhibition catalogue also featured these objects, shown after conservation. The conservators have already presented a paper about the conservation process and this gives evidence of my role (see below).

The link to the NMS archive article is as follows:

http://www.nms.ac.uk/about_us/about_us/search.aspx?terms=silver+made+in+scotland

1 Images of the doublet and hose after conservation

THE DOUBLET

THE TRUNK HOSE

2 George Dalgleish & Henry Steuart Fothringham, Silver: Made in Scotland (Edinburgh: NMSE - Publishing, 2008). ISBN: 978 1 905267 13 2

Cover image and pages related to the Garter Suit of Doublet and Hose:


National
Museums
Scotland
SILVER
Made in Scotland
GEORGE DALGLEISH
HENRY STEUART FOTHRINGHAM

Careful correlation between these sources and the surviving examples of goldsmiths' work can throw fascinating light on the history of the craft. It can also illuminate the lives of the people who made and used silver and gold in Scotland in different ways throughout the centuries.

This book, and the exhibition, are divided into various themes to provide an insight into this remarkable heritage over 550 years. We start by looking at the raw materials themselves, their need to be alloyed or mixed with less valuable metals to make them useable and the subsequent need for testing, along with a look at how the craftsmen who worked in gold and silver organised themselves in 'The Science of Silver and "The Lovable Craft"'. Very little domestic silver and gold has survived from before the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, so 'Surviving the Melting Pot' suggests some explanations for this and brings together for the first time virtually all the known remaining pieces. We then investigate 'Edinburgh: The Golden Age'; the capital has always been the major centre of the craft. In 'Making their Mark: Burgh Silver' we look at the work of craftsmen in the rest of Scotland; their history is, in some instances, as old, if not older, than that of Edinburgh. The development of particular styles and the changing demand for silver throughout Scotland dominate 'Fashioned in Silver'. A series of 'case studies' looks at particular types and uses of silver in 'Kirk Silver', 'Ceremonial and Presentation Silver' and 'Sporting Glories'. We are particularly fortunate to have a veritable galaxy of first-class artists and craftspeople working in Scotland at the moment. 'Silver Now' looks at this phenomenon and finishes, in a blaze of glory, with the ground-breaking contemporary initiative of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of the City of Edinburgh's 'Silver of the Stars'.

Silver and gold have been used to make coinage, medals, clothing, jewellery, scientific instruments, ornaments, spoons and practical vessels for church, state and domestic use. This first small section looks at a few of the wide range of important pieces from the 16th to the 20th centuries; an 'overture' to the full display of *Silver: Made in Scotland*.

1.1 'GARTER SUIT' OF DOUBLET AND HOSE

Suit made of silver tissue for the 6th Duke of Lennox, *c.*1661

Doublet (chest) 89 cm; hose (waist) 83 cm

NMS A.1947.257; donated by Hon. Lady Hersey Baird of Lennoxlove; conserved for display with a generous bequest from the late Margaret Swain

The remaining part of a suit, or uniform, of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, England's premier chivalric order. Worn under the mantle, the suit belonged to Charles Stuart, 6th Duke of Lennox and 3rd Duke of Richmond (1639-72). King Charles II reinvigorated the Order on his Restoration in 1660, and is said to have influenced the design of the highly fashionable uniform himself. The Duke of Lennox, a favourite of the King, was created a Knight of the Garter in 1661 when, presumably, he had this suit made. His career was turbulent and often attended by scandal. In 1672 he was made ambassador to Denmark, but died after falling into the freezing sea attempting to board his ship. He was survived by his wife Frances Teresa Stuart, known as 'La Belle Stewart', reputedly the model for the portrait of Britannia used on coins. Having no children, she instructed her trustees to purchase Lethington House near Haddington for her cousin Lord Blantyre, and to rename it 'Lennoxlove' in their memory.

The doublet and hose are made of plain weave silk with an additional weft of thin silver foil strips to make a fabric sometimes known as 'silver tissue'. The applied silver lace is made of silver foil wrapped around silk fibres. Research in the National Museums Scotland's analytical laboratories shows that the silver used to make these materials is of exceptionally high purity, probably because 'fine' or nearly pure silver like this is soft and easy to beat flat to make into

3.4 (detail)

1.1 (doublet)

1.1 (hose)

1.1 (detail)

thin foil. It is, however, extremely fragile, and it is only through extensive and painstaking work by the Museum conservators that this rare survival can be safely displayed and preserved for the future.

Not all items made of silver are vessels or jewellery. The Garter Suit shows an unusual use of fine silver in a garment that epitomised high fashion, wealth, power and status.

1.2 THE METHUEN CUP

Possibly John Veitch, Edinburgh, *c.*1530

Marks (struck three times, on cover flange, inside bowl and on underside of foot): 'Vh' in a shield (possibly John Veitch)

H (max.) 17.8 cm; D (rim) 11.5 cm; D (foot) 6.7 cm

Lent by Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Collection

Provenance: by descent to Field Marshall Lord Methuen GCB; Christie's sale, London, 25 February 1920, lot 87; Crichton Brothers, London; William Randolph Hearst Collection

References: Eeles (1920), pp. 285-89; Finlay and Fothringham (1991), pp. 58-60; Norman-Wilcox (1961), pp. 10-15; Schroder (1986), pp. 406-08

Shallow silver-gilt bowl, with octagonal-section rock crystal stem with central band, attached to bowl and foot by notched collars, each with four scrolls; the low-domed foot is edged with a finely-milled band; the double-domed cover has a crystal finial carved with six bosses, held by an open serpent-shaped ring.

Henry Steuart Fothringham has tentatively suggested that one possible candidate for the maker of this beautiful little cup could be John Veitch, goldsmith in Edinburgh. If one were to accept this suggestion, then the Methuen Cup would be the earliest surviving marked example of Scottish silver.

The notched collars and 'milled' edge of the foot are similar in design and construction to the lower rim-band of the Bute Mazer [3.1]; this perhaps further strengthens the case for a Scottish origin. There has been considerable discussion about the use of the cup – whether for secular or for religious purposes.

The use of rock crystal in highly prestigious and talismanic objects was fairly common in Scotland, from simple mounted balls of rock crystal to the magnificent mounted crystal Lochbuie, Lorne, Ugadale and Ballochyle Brooches [see 3.13].

1.2

3 Sarah Foskett and Lynn McClean 'Precious Metal: the conservation of a 17th century garter suit' in 'Conservation of three-dimensional textiles, 7th North American Textile Conservation Conference Preprints, Quebec City, Canada, 2009.

Title page of article with abstract and page relating to my activity in conservation project:

PRECIOUS METAL: THE CONSERVATION OF A 17TH CENTURY GARTER SUIT

Sarah Foskett and Lynn McClean

Abstract-The Garter Suit is the earliest of three known garments relating to the Most Noble Order of the Garter. Dating from the 1660s, this rare survival comprises a doublet and trunk hose, made of cream silk fabric with a supplementary weft of fine silver, decorated with metal thread braid and lace and voluminous looped ribbons of lace and silk.

A previous treatment in the 1960s had involved dismantling the doublet and trunk hose in order to support the fabrics with adhesive coated nylon net. When the Garter Suit was required for display in the 'Silver: Made in Scotland' exhibition at the Royal Museum in January 2008 this treatment was re-evaluated and the generally poor condition of the garment noted. The silver metal threads were weak and brittle, there was much loss of metal thread exposing the ground fabric, and the adhesive treatment was failing as well as causing stiffness of the fabric.

The paper will detail the decision to dismantle the doublet and trunk hose again, the ethical considerations and the complexities of the practical treatment. Central to the success of the project was a collaboration with an expert in the cut and construction of male dress. The pattern and toile resulting from this work were used both to aid the conservation treatment and commission a made-to-measure display figure. The extensive documentation necessary and scientific research undertaken to underpin the conservation treatment will be discussed.

Título-Metal precioso: La conservación de un traje del siglo XVII perteneciente a la Orden de Garter**. Resumen-** El traje de la orden de Garter es el más antiguo de las tres prendas conocidas que están asociadas a la Muy Noble Orden de Garter. Originaria de la década de 1660, este inusual conjunto sobreviviente comprende un jubón y calzas, hechos de tela de seda color crema con una trama suplementaria de plata fina, decorada con encajes y galones de hilo metálico y con voluminosas cintas enrolladas de seda y encaje.

Un previo tratamiento de intervención en la década de 1960 incluyó el desarmado del jubón y las calzas para reforzar las telas con una malla de nylon recubierta de adhesivo. Cuando el traje de Garter fue solicitado para la exposición: "*Silver: Made in Scotland*" ("Plata: Hecho en Escocia") en el *Royal Museum*, en enero de 2008, este tratamiento fue re-evaluado y se hizo evidente el mal estado de conservación de la prenda. Los hilos de plata se encontraban débiles y quebradizos, había una extensa pérdida de hilos metálicos dejando expuesta la tela de soporte, el tratamiento de adhesión no estaba cumpliendo su función y el adhesivo estaba causando rigidez en el tejido.

Esta ponencia explicará la decisión de desarmar nuevamente el jubón y las calzas, así como las consideraciones éticas y las dificultades del tratamiento práctico. La colaboración de un experto en corte y confección de indumentaria masculina fue fundamental para el éxito del proyecto. El patrón y el modelo, resultado de esta colaboración, se emplearon tanto para el tratamiento de conservación como para la elaboración de un maniquí hecho a la medida. De igual manera, se

5.3 PHOTOMICROGRAPHY

Photomicrographs[15] highlighted the extent of the degradation of the ground weave of the silver fabric.

5.4 X-RAY IMAGING

X-radiography was carried out to gain further information about the construction of the doublet and braids, in particular the pattern of the boning. However, this was not possible to see the boning, due to the densities and multiples of metal thread layers involved[16] **(Fig.4)**.

The results of these analyses confirmed the extraordinary quality of the suit and the extent of the degradation, adding weight to the case for a full conservation treatment

5.5 ANALYSIS OF THE CUT AND CONSTRUCTION

It was felt that understanding the cut and construction of the suit was fundamental to the success of any conservation treatment. The construction of the trunk-hose in particular appeared complex and bewildering at first sight. The 3-dimensional nature and volume made it difficult to differentiate between layers or to see the relationship between components. David Wilcox, Lecturer in the Department of Performance Costume, Edinburgh College of Art, was approached to join the project due to his specialist knowledge in the cut and construction of European men's clothing for the period 1640 to 1840. He had taken a pattern of the garter suit in 2001, and agreed to explain the construction of the garments using the pattern pieces and advise on details such as the position of stitch holes, patterns of wear and possible alterations. He also agreed to make a cotton 'toile' which could be used to facilitate treatment decisions, to commission a bespoke mannequin and possibly to have a didactic purpose in the long term[17].

This research and analysis supported the decision that a fully interventive treatment would be the most successful and beneficial for the long term preservation of the object. Discussion with NMS curators[18] was also important in establishing support for a treatment that would radically alter the object again. The time estimated had implications for project planning and had to be agreed within the Conservation and Analytical Research Department's programme.

6. TREATMENT

The treatment of both components of the suit was equally challenging but in different ways. For the doublet the main challenge was providing effective support of the upper sleeve and underarms, which would be at risk during display. For the trunk-hose ensuring the full support of the silver fabric was appropriate and accurately inserted into the 3-dimensional shape was the priority. The treatments, although different, followed the same pattern.

6.1 DISMANTLING THE COMPONENTS

Documentation was particularly important at this stage to ensure that the position of components was accurately recorded both for future reference and to facilitate the correct re-assembly of the piece. Three techniques were used: